Teach Me Not To Eat, But To Hunt

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/7987615.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Tobias Budge
Additional Tags:	Ripper!AU, Hunter!Will, Manipulative Hannibal, Hannibal is a Cannibal, Possessive Hannibal, References to Supernatural (TV), Don't copy to another site
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2016-09-08 Updated: 2016-09-15 Words: 3,160 Chapters: 2/?

Teach Me Not To Eat, But To Hunt

by TheSilverQueen

Summary

Will is an apprentice hunter, more commonly known as a ripper. To graduate to the next stage in his training, he's given the task of eliminating Dr. Hannibal Lecter, a suspected skinwalker.

Too bad Will doesn't know that Hannibal is a fearsome ripper in his own right.

Notes

Oookay, so technically this is a prologue, but if I label it that, then the next chapter will be Chapter 2: Chapter 1 and that will drive me insane. So! Chapter one, aka the prologue.

In actual important information, this was inspired by a sneek peak I did a while back that got some really good feedback, so that motivated me into making more until it became this monster.

Also the title was born of my struggle of reforming the common saying about giving a man a meal versus teaching him how to fish, because I thought the metaphor was perfect for Hannigram, but that saying was waaaay too long for a title. So. Instead of giving Will good food, Hannibal's gonna teach him how to hunt, and therein is the summary of this fic.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A skinwalker and a wendigo walk into an opera.

They know each other immediately, as every ripper knows, and although they are careful to socialize and mingle and drink often, their eyes never leave the other. Therefore, at the very end, when the skinwalker inclines his head and departs to a more secluded alcove, the wendigo excuses himself and follows, drink in hand and curiosity in mind.

“Forgive me for not introducing myself earlier,” says the skinwalker.

The wendigo smiles, but keeps his teeth sheathed. Those sharp teeth are for victims, not fellow rippers. “I was unaware that a new hunter had been assigned to my area,” replies the wendigo.

“I haven’t been assigned to any territory. I have an apprentice, and he must learn to hunt among the sharks as well as the herrings and rabbits.”

“Even a rabbit may be fierce when cornered.”

“That,” the skinwalker says, “is something he will learn at a later stage.”

The wendigo inclines his head. “But of course. He is your student, to raise as you desire.”

“Besides, I could not unseat you from this territory in my wildest dreams. You have held Chesapeake Bay as yours for many years now. A polite man might wonder at how this has been done.”

Wonder indeed. Hunters are nomadic creatures, always seeking new prey, new hunting grounds, and new things to learn. The wendigo has held Chesapeake Bay for far longer than some hunters have even lived, but there are no secrets to be read in the way he drinks his wine or smiles at his colleague.

“A polite man might always wonder at new things,” responds the wendigo. “However, a smart one might realize that it is always wise to choose carefully when requesting a favor from another.”

“I do not come to request a favor.”

“No?”

“I come to request a partnership, of sorts.”

Here now, the teeth begin to show. Even monsters might take consorts, but they are not monsters. They are rippers, and each sits atop a pyramid of their own through blood and

right.

“I have no interest in training an apprentice of any kind,” the wendigo tells the skinwalker. “I cannot teach you what you do not know about my kind, and what I could teach is beyond your skill to comprehend. You have been trained. You are set in your ways. Be a skinwalker, and be content in that. You will already have many little children vying for your guiding hand as a mentor.”

With that, the wendigo turns to leave, but the skinwalker reaches out and tugs at the wendigo’s sleeve.

“I said a partnership, not an apprenticeship. I would be your equal.”

The wendigo tilts his head, and lets his true teeth show. In the cover of darkness, who is to say that the flash of light is not merely flames dancing off the rim of his glass, carefully clenched between his fingers?

“My kind hunt alone, even if your kind does not,” the wendigo says, and his voice is a warning, soft and dark, like the whisper of wind over grass before they gather into a tornado.

The skinwalker smiles, but it too is a pantomime of humanity. It stretches at too tight skin, threatening to break a mask spent days and weeks gathering and constructing, but it does not break. Not yet. It’s always so much more difficult to shed a mask that has been torn than one carefully peeled apart.

“You are my kind. Just older, and much more powerful.”

“Perhaps,” says the wendigo to the skinwalker, “perhaps.”

“So.”

“So.”

The skinwalker releases the wendigo. “I hope we can part as fellows, if not friends, then.”

“To your future kills,” toasts the wendigo, and they both drink, although never take their eyes off the other. It’s not in the nature of alpha predators to lower guard in front of others.

They swallow at the same time, and then melt away, so that no one notices how both end up at opposite ends of the room, seemingly without having made any effort at walking anywhere. It’s a skill only the experienced can master, through hard effort and practice.

Afterwards, the skinwalker returns home, and greets his apprentice. It’s a man-child, for although the boy is old enough to stand as a man among sheep and lions and sharks, among skinwalkers and werewolves and vampires, his years and experience make him but a mildly irritating insect to swat at. His teeth are growing though, and so too are his claws and eyes. In time, the skinwalker thinks, he will be a formidable opponent. In time.

Or, perhaps, very, very soon.

“Come here,” says the skinwalker to the man-child, “I have an assignment for you.”

The boy perks up. Given that he has spent the past month trapped inside, learning the painstakingly slow process of controlling the need to hunt, he is eager for anything that takes him past the dark walls of the basement he calls home.

“What’s the name?” says the boy.

The skinwalker retrieves a newspaper, which he had bought on the way home. On the front page are pictures from the opera of last night, and that he folds until he can point at a very distinctive face, smiling and clapping.

“His name,” the skinwalker declares, “is Hannibal Lecter.”

The boy studies the photo and then smiles. “I will bring you his head, Mr. Budge,” he promises.

The skinwalker laughs and pats the boy’s curls. It will be a pity, when it comes trim it back into something tame, but for now, he is content to have the boy play at a harmless stray kitten rather than the powerful mongoose he is growing into. “No, my Will,” says the skinwalker, “I wish for you to bring me his heart.”

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this, despite its terrible unedited and unbetaed self. But I got tired of looking at it so I figured might as well put it out. Next chapter is complete, I'm just editing that bit, so it shouldn't take too long to come out. And by that, I mean about a week, for anyone who's really curious.

Comments and kudos will go towards the muse's food supply so she can keep churning out words instead of getting up to actually scrounge for food :)

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Will makes his move.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Dialogue does not belong to me, unfortunately, cuz I don't own Hannibal. Otherwise you all know Will and Hannibal would've done a little more than just hug at the cliff scene, if you know what I mean.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Skinwalker: Also referred to as a skinchanger – although not to be confused with a shapeshifter – these have the ability to change to seemingly harmless faces of themselves, although they are often bound by a pack mentality or drive for a pack and prefer the hearts of their victims

Will's Notes: *They're cryptic and annoying and nothing like the fluffy cute fscking dogs you see on Google*

Will spends the better part of two weeks stalking Lecter. Normally, he'd spend more for a skinwalker, but Lecter has a surprisingly rigid routine that he follows with religious devotion. He rises at a ridiculous hour to prepare food, then drives to his office, stays there and eats his own homemade lunch in between seeing patients, and then drives right back home to enjoy an elaborate and slow paced dinner, after which he retires to play weird old instruments and drink copious amounts of wine. Then it's off to bed before he starts the whole process over again.

He is literally the most boring hunt Will's ever had.

The only time that routine ever changes is for weekend opera sojourns, where he spends his time mingling and drinking instead of playing weird instruments, or when his patients call with emergencies and he drives out for house calls. Will didn't even know psychiatrists *did* house calls, but Lecter does it.

Even the man's grocery shopping is predictable and boring. Organic, or locally grown, or natural, and never something he might be able to make himself.

Will, moodily perched in a tree and chewing on an old granola bar, really, really envies the man's skill and time as he watches Lecter painstakingly make his own bread, his own alcohol, and even his own soup stock.

The most important thing Will had learned about skinwalkers is that they were often drawn to or part of packs. They love being surrounded by the like-minded, or at least lesser folk so they can be the alphas of their own little pyramids. Lecter, on the other hand, seems just as content being alone as he is with his little cooing circle of socialites, which is surprising but not unexpected. Even monsters fall on different parts of a long, long spectrum, from the most mundane to the most unexpected.

Will's first hunt had definitely fallen on the unexpected side.

It'd been a hellhound, a woman who – once fixated on a target – just would not let go. She'd pick someone and then bite and hold on and on and on and on. Will had been the only one able to see her pattern, although the police certainly hadn't believed a little boy with big blue eyes and bouncing curls, so they'd laughed and offered him sweets and then sent him on his way. Will had fumed and then hid in a barn, sharpening a knife until the edge had been so thin and fine he'd accidentally cut himself whilst testing it. He had even dipped the knife in some silver and holy water, unsure of what to do know, but guessing that more wouldn't hurt.

Fortunately, he'd never had the chance to use the blade.

Instead of his target, a man in a fine suit had walked in, bearing the hellhound's head, and he'd looked straight up into where Will had been hiding and said, "You're going to need a little bit bigger of a blade than that tiny needle."

That had been Will's introduction, both to the hunting lifestyle and his teacher, Tobias Budge. Hunters were responsible for removing the dredges of society, Budge had explained, those who had given into the primal side of humanity and lost themselves in it. Hunters – more informally called "rippers" – were tasked with understanding that primal side enough to take down the monsters without being entirely consumed by it. Not everyone was cut out for that line of work, and certainly there had been a few hunters who'd fallen by the wayside, but it was exciting and new and interesting, and Will had signed on before Budge could even finish speaking. It hadn't been like there was anything left in Will's tiny backwater town that he could call home, not after the death of his father and the abandonment of his mother, so he'd left without a backwards glance.

Fast forward, and now here was Will, older and taller and somewhat wiser in hunting ways. He was nowhere near ready to take on the caseload of a full Ripper, according to Budge, but he was getting there.

Lecter would his first solo hunt, and Will was determined to ensure that it would be a resounding success.

To that end, after two weeks of carefully tailing Lecter everywhere and making a predictable and fairly reliable table of his movements, Will drops from his cover in the trees on evening when Lecter is at a late appointment with a patient and creeps forward into the man's house.

To his shock, the man's door is unlocked, and gives way with barely a sound when Will pushes. Will scowls and tucks his lock picking set back into his pocket. Budge had insisted Will spend months on that skill, and in truth, all Will to do was walk right in the front door. Or patio door, as Will bets that isn't locked either.

Of course, Lecter is not entirely without recourse. There are no carpets on the first floor, only solid wooden floors where footsteps can easily be heard, so at least sneaking up without good familiarity of the squeaky rhythms of the floor is rather difficult. There are also a lot of antlers all over the walls. Like, Will bets there's enough for an entire herd of deer and then some. Also there are weird creepy mirrors in strange places, enough that sometimes Will freaks himself out when creeping out because he isn't expecting his own face to suddenly pop up.

The kitchen is spotless, so Will slips off his shoes and pads around barefoot to avoid tracking in any dirt. He notes the positioning of knives and other weapons, as well as marveling at the insanely neatly packed freezer. It's so dense Will could probably chuck ice blocks at Lecter and kill him that way.

Next up in a second office, and then another ridiculous neat dining room, and then a library, from which Will barely resists the urge to filch a book or two. Or ten. It's so large that Lecter probably wouldn't even notice a book missing until he was already dead.

Maybe.

Will swallows the urge and reluctantly heads upstairs, where he finds more obsessively neat rooms. There are like three guest bedrooms, all with linens and bedsheets carefully laid out, tastefully matching the interior decorations, and not any of them have a single speck of dust. Even the guest bathroom is sparkling clean with fresh toothbrushes and other things neatly laid out. There are even matching towels laid out next to the bath.

Will rolls his eyes at the decadence. His observations had told him Lecter was wealthy, but even this is a bit much.

Of course, the antlers are up here too, along with a weird suit of Japanese armor or something that Will resists the urge to poke. It's so old Will's not sure if it would make a better weapon if he disassembled it and stabbed Lecter with individual plates or if he just hid in it and pounced. He's small enough that he could probably fit.

Will stashes a few little convenient weapons here and there, but only the tiny innocuous ones. A hairpin here, a pen there, a safety pin in a tiny shadowy corner. Nothing to make Lecter suspicious hopefully, but definitely enough to turn the tide if anything goes against plan.

In under an hour, Will is slipping back out, careful to latch the door, and back up his tree.

That night, he dreams of antlers, sharp and black and stark against the moonlight, and a clawed hand that reaches effortlessly towards him, but just out of reach. His dream-self reaches towards the hand, but never quite makes it, and the creature laughs and stomps, sending up a mist of white fresh snow.

Will picks a Friday night to make his assault. Firstly he buys new clothing and tucks it away with extra provisions and medical supplies that he buries at the edge of Lecter's property. That way he can slip away unnoticed and lick his wounds if need be. Secondly, he purchases more new clothing for himself, but better quality – flannel shirts and jeans that envelop him and make him seem smaller and more vulnerable than usual, and to better distract Lecter's keen senses with his appalling dress sense. Thirdly, he sneaks in and starts attending some lectures of a woman named Alana Bloom, with whom he surmises a close relationship with Lecter, as his way in, careful to be spotted once in a while when the good doctor comes to visit. He even makes sure to strike up a conversation with her here and there, although he always blushes and slips away before Lecter gets close. The point is to establish relationship, not to be sniffed out.

Then, on a cold and cloudy Friday night, Will bangs on the door and slips right into the foyer, stomping off dirt and waiting for Lecter to appear.

Lecter pops up like Will had summoned him, wine glass in one hand, still immaculately dressed, with half of his dinner abandoned on the table in the dining room. His eyebrows rise when they see Will's shoes and coat abandoned on the floor, and then they nearly join his hairline when they put two and two together to realize that Will's outfit clashes with every bit of décor Lecter's got in the foyer.

"I kissed Alana Bloom," Will blurts out, as though embarrassed.

And, well. Whatever Lecter had been expecting, clearly it wasn't that.

The good doctor frowns and says, "Come in, of course."

"Yeah, sorry, but thanks," Will says, and marches forward into the dining room, careful to nearly make a wrong turn into the kitchen for believability's sake. Once there, he helps himself to a glass of wine, and can barely contain his laughter at Lecter's disapproving frown.

"I wonder why you felt compelled to drive all the way from Quantico to here just to confess this to me, someone you barely know," Lecter says, like an opening volley.

"Well, I've wanted to kiss her since I first met her," Will says, injecting as much dreaminess into his voice as he can before he takes another large gulp of wine. "She's very kissable."

Lecter winces. It's glorious.

"You waited a long time, which suggests you were kissing her for a reason, in addition to wanting to."

"Well . . . I heard some rumors," Will confesses, although he handily leaves out the bit about, you know, starting them in the first place. "That you and her had broken up, so I figured why not take the chance, but then when her face changed I realized that it had been just rumors, so I figured I should apologize and well . . . here I am."

Lecter says nothing.

“So . . . I’m sorry? I’m not sure what else you want to hear.”

Which is when Lecter actually, legitimately just loses it. He applauds and laughs like Will’s been the greatest opera he’s ever seen, laughing so hard that tears start to form in his eyes. If he was any less of a rigid gentleman, Will suspects he would have collapsed to the floor from the force of his amusement.

“What? Did I say something wrong?”

Finally, Lecter meets his eyes, and in that moment, Will knows he’s in deep trouble.

“No, you did not, Will Graham,” Lecter says, voice as pleasant as a summer breeze, taking a single, slow step forward with each word. “But I do thank you for the very amusing performance. In another life, you might have had a fine career as an actor.”

To anyone else, Will might’ve stalled or stammered, trying to regain his cover, but Lecter’s eyes are deep and dark like a bottomless well, and in them, Will only reads amusement and determination, like a steel wall he cannot breach. Will blinks, and the pendulum swings, and in that, Will can see each calculated step – the unlocked front door, the angled dinner table blocking the patio door, the glass of wine Lecter so carefully set aside – and know that Lecter let him inside, and possible knew all this time that he was watching. Bastard probably even put on a show of making warm delicious bread, just to make granola-bar-eating Will jealous.

So, Will does the reasonable thing.

He bolts.

Lecter laughs, deep and booming like the creature of Will’s nightmares, and pounces.

Skinwalker Recommended Plan of Attack: Be unexpected. Intrude on the pack and home life. Interrupt the rhythm and the kill becomes easier when the target is disoriented and confused.

Hannibal’s Critique: *Will’s choice of random and confusing attack was excellent, except for that the fact that any skinwalker would have smelled his intrusion. Next time, dearest, conceal your scent.*

Chapter End Notes

Any comments or kudos are more than welcome! To anyone who's already left them - HUGS AND COOKIES, cuz seriously, nothing makes an author's day like the notification of a comment/kudo.

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